

Ralston Post Office and Manor House  
Ralston, Morris County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-357

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
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133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Ralston Post Office and Manor House  
Ralston, Morris County, New Jersey

Owner: Mrs. Peter De Mott

Date of Erection: About 1785

Architect:

Builder: John Ralston

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Post Office - one and one-half  
Manor House - two and one-half

Materials of Construction:

Post Office  
Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - frame construction

Interior walls - plaster over hand  
hewn lath

Roof - pitch

Manor House  
Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - frame construction

Interior walls - plaster on lath

Roof - pitch

Historical Data:

A claim has been made that the post office  
is the oldest in continuous use in United States. However,

no post office was established in Ralston until 1893, so that that statement does not seem to be true. The truth is that it is possibly the oldest building in the United States in which a post office is housed.

In 1713 Daniel Wills of Burlington County made a survey of this section and his son, John Wills, was the first settler somewhere between 1720-1723. The settlement was originally called "Roxitus", an Indian name supposed to mean "rock of the big meeting". David Brainard preached to the Indians here during 1740.

Both the store and the house were built by John Ralston about 1785 as near as can be established. The mill was built about 1772 by one John Logan, and the present post office was built as a store to serve as an outlet for the mill. It was used as a store until 1892 after which time, when Peter De Mott became postmaster and bought the property from the Leddell estate, both the store and the mill were discontinued. The old store also served as a stage-coach station in early days.

The post office frame is of hand hewn oak, mortised and tenoned. The siding on rear and side walls is of oak while the front wall is covered with wide tongued and grooved pine boards. The floors are of hand hewn oak planks. The original hardware is still intact. It has an unusual roof overhanging the front by about three feet.

Few changes have been made in the manor house. Each floor has four big rooms twenty by twenty-four feet, each with an open fireplace. The kitchen fireplace is an exceptionally large one. The floors have been renewed.

## Historical Data:

The post office dates back to the year 1775. It has been used continuously as a post office since June 17, 1792 and is the oldest post office in continuous use in the United States. The land upon which these buildings stand was part of an original tract of five hundred acres bought from the Indians in 1730. It was called "Roxitus" by the Indians and the old settlers interpreted this as meaning "rock of the big meeting". During the seventeen fourties David Freinard famous missionary to the Indians preached here.

The building was originally used as a store and then as a post office; besides this it served as a stage-coach station. It was used as a store up until 1832, serving as an outlet for the grist mill (NJ-360) which was attached to the property. Both the store and the grist mill were discontinued in 1832 when Peter De Kott became the postmaster and bought the property from the Leddell estate.

The post office is of balloon construction. The frame is of hand hewn oak with mortised beams, joists, and knee braces. Only wooden dowels were used in the construction of the building. The siding is oak; the front is of tongue and grooved pine boards. The floor is of hand hewn oak planks. The original hardware is still in use. The roof overhangs about thirty-six inches toward the front.

The manor house was built in 1781 and few changes have been made. Each floor has four big rooms twenty by twenty-four feet, each with an open fireplace. The kitchen fireplace is an exceptionally large one. The floors have been renewed.

Bibliography:

Material obtained from Mrs. Peter  
De Mott, the present owner and from  
Mr. Calvin Davis authority on Mendham  
and Ralston

Walter E. Pitt  
Supervising Historian

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